the WATER TAP
WASHINGTON'S DRINKING WATER NEWSLETTER

Washington State Department of Health
Environmental Health Programs

Issue 36 • December 1998

DOH Prepared to Help Purveyors with Consumer Confidence Reports

Starting next October, under a federal rule recently issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, all of Washington's 2000-plus Group A community water systems will be required to provide annual consumer confidence reports to their customers. This past October, the Department of Health sent a survey to water system owners to evaluate the impact of this new requirement and to help DOH determine what it can do to help the system owners write their reports.

Among those that send out surveys for a living, a 15 percent return rate is a great response. So you might understand why Donna Freier, manager of DOH's Consumer Confidence Report Program, was delighted about the nearly 50 percent return rate she got from Washington's water purveyors. "We need to find out what the system owners expect from the process—their good and their not-so-good expectations about preparing the report," Freier said last week. "With these survey return rates, I'm confident that we will."

Freier added that, while system owners aren't scheduled to get consumer confidence reports out to their customers until October 19, 1999, "this early survey will help DOH understand what we need to give our customers—the system owners— so they can get their reports ready to go." Freier also said she was pleased to see, as she leafed through the surveys, that many system owners think the report will be a handy tool for communicating with their customers. Complete survey results will be available, in January, on the Division of Drinking Water's Home Page and in a future issue of *Water Tap*.

Here are three more ways for system operators to tell DOH what they think about the new consumer confidence report regulation:

The Consumer Confidence Report Steering Committee, which consists of 11 stakeholder group representatives, is eager to get comments about the new regulation and suggestions of ways DOH can coordinate the process of developing the reports. Committee stakeholder groups are small and large water system owners, an analytical laboratory, the League of Women Voters, and the Washington Environmental Council. Contact Donna Freier to find out how to get in touch with a steering committee member.

DOH will offer workshops and set up meetings designed to involve and educate the public and water purveyors about the new rule, most likely beginning in early 1999.

Contact Donna Freier directly. She would like to hear what purveyors think as she develops tools to help them understand the regulation and write consumer confidence reports.

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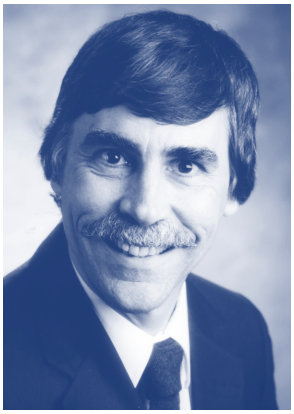


Letter From The Director...

Working together critical to assuring safe drinking water

In mid-October, *USA Today* published a 10-page special report criticizing state and federal drinking water programs. Headlines like *"Lax oversight raises tap water risks"* and *"Investigation finds that communities failing to keep water clean"* greeted me. The negative perceptions relayed by these articles concerned me, of course.

But because we had advance notice that the series was going to run and would be critical, I worried a little less than I might have. The Department of Health had had time to prepare its response. One thing we had done, early on, was alert our partners in drinking water protection. I knew that the members of the Washington Water Utility Council, local health officials, and the Water Supply Advisory Committee, among others, were in the loop, and also would have had time to prepare a response to the articles.

The scope and tone of the *USA Today* articles highlight again just how important it is that we work together. We need to engage elected officials in meaningful discussions about drinking water issues and raise awareness in local communities about the importance of safe and adequate drinking water. In 1999, the Department of Health will draw attention to drinking water issues by promoting National Drinking Water Week and the 25th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act. (You will find some ideas about how you might partner with the department to make these a success in forthcoming issues of *Water Tap*.) Consumer confidence reports, the subject of our front page story, are scheduled to go to customers of 2,000 Washington water systems next year. The reports will also be an excellent communication tool.

Working together is a theme at the national level, too. In his October presentation to the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, the president of the American Water Works Association, Roderick Holme, called for an "era of partnership" among utilities, regulators, representative organizations and other stakeholders. We need to act as partners if we are to successfully implement the many new requirements contained in the reauthorized Safe Drinking Water Act, Holme said.

We all know that the ongoing challenges of providing safe and reliable drinking water are daunting. With limited resources and multiple new program requirements on the horizon, we do, indeed, need to create an era of partnership if we are to meet the public's expectation of safe drinking water.

Sincerely,

Gregg Grunenfelder, Director

(continued from front page)

Basics of the Consumer Confidence Report Regulation

Once each year, all Group A community water systems are to provide a summary of their water quality monitoring results to their customers. The basic required report information includes:

1. Source water information
2. A table of detected contaminants
3. Contaminant source information
4. Possible health effects
5. Compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act
6. Corrective action taken by the utility
7. Opportunities for public involvement
8. Phone numbers

Although this is not a complete list, these eight elements cover the bulk of the information to be included in a consumer confidence report. The first report is due to customers of Group A community water systems by October 19, 1999. Through its CCR Program, DOH's Division of Drinking Water will be helping purveyors understand the CCR requirements and write their reports.

Donna Freier, *Consumer Confidence Report Program Manager*: phone (360) 236-3162, fax (360) 236-2252 or e-mail dsf0303@doh.wa.gov. HomePage: www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw

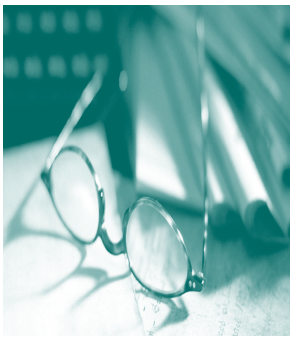
Third Party Sanitary Surveys Underway

A number of local health jurisdictions have enlisted in an effort by DOH to increase the field presence of public health through sanitary surveys of small water systems. Earlier this year, DOH developed a standard scope of work, which will be adapted for each jurisdiction, and assembled an initial list of systems to be visited. Jefferson County Health and Human Services, Southwest Washington Health District, and Whatcom County Health and Human Services Department each have an agreement with DOH that authorizes them to conduct surveys. Whatcom County has already completed 17 inspections.

Five additional local health jurisdictions are waiting for their joint operating agreements to be approved. Ideally, they will be signed soon so the utilities that are going to be inspected in these jurisdictions can be notified early in 1999.

DOH offers a two-part qualification training for those who want to conduct sanitary surveys. One part covers technical aspects of surveying and the other covers administrative. An administrative training session will be offered by DOH in the Tacoma area on March 2, 1999. To register, call Chrissie Smith, at Division of Drinking Water Headquarters, (360) 236-3161. A two-day technical training will be scheduled when there is an apparent need for it. The qualification program is open to LHJ staff members and to members of the public. The technical part of the qualification program can be waived if an applicant qualifies through other training or on-the-job experience.

For more information on the third party survey program, or to request an application that will put you on mailing list for training sessions, contact Dan Sander at (509) 456-2457. You can e-mail him at DKS0303@hub.doh.gov.wa.



WAC Revision Update

On November 12, the Washington State Board of Health approved Department of Health-proposed revisions to state regulations that directly affect Group A Public Water Systems and the over 4 million Washington residents served by them. The revisions were developed by the DOH Division of Drinking Water over the course of a three-year, public process that included the active participation of numerous stakeholders.

Prior to adopting the revisions, the Board conducted a public hearing on the proposed changes to WAC Chapter 246-290. Overall, public response at the hearing was positive. DOH provided a number of letters written in support of the draft regulation. Several members of the public submitted testimony and suggested minor changes.

The Board requested additional review of these suggestions and clarification of some with the Environmental Protection Agency. The resulting information was presented at the Board's December meeting, and a final set of revisions was adopted. DOH expects to file the final revised WAC with the Code Reviser within a month. The final will take affect 31 days after the day it is filed — expected to be sometime in late January or early February 1999.

The Department of Health is grateful to all the water system operators and members of the public who participated in the lengthy process of revising the WAC. Your interest and advice were invaluable.

For more information, contact Jude Van Buren at (360) 236-3122.

Year End Reminder: *Monitor Now for Nitrate, Lead and Copper*

As the end of 1998 fast approaches, check your records to confirm that you are current on nitrate, lead and copper monitoring. (Also check on lead public education requirements, if they apply to your system.)

Nitrate samples are required at least once a year from all NTNC and TNC water systems. A preliminary look at sampling data shows that a large number of these systems still need to get their 1998 samples in.

Group A small community and NTNC systems should have completed at least two rounds of lead and copper sampling by the end of the year. Medium and large community systems should conduct annual or triennial sampling, if it's due this year. Lead and copper requirements don't apply to TNC systems.

Drinking Water Team Puts QI To Work

"Quality Improvement isn't just a process. It's about getting tangible results."
- Gregg Grunenfelder

Some people at the Division of Drinking Water are knee-deep in a new way of doing business. A division team has been trained in the principles and techniques of quality improvement (QI, to insiders), and is putting them to use in a pilot project focused on how the division evaluates drinking water risks and issues health advisories.

So, what exactly, is quality improvement? The quality improvement process always includes these four characteristics:

Employee involvement - QI recognizes the fact that employees, not managers and supervisors, know the most about their work and their customers' needs. Employees should be involved in decisions that affect their jobs.

Customer focus - QI looks at how employees are helping their customers be successful (hints: by streamlining, clarifying).

Measurement systems - QI emphasizes that decisions should be based on data, not hunches or gut feelings.

Process improvement - QI encourages employees to simplify processes, learn new skills, and shoulder authority.

Four Department of Health QI teams received formal training on the quality improvement process this fall. The drinking water team decided that a good first step for it to take would be to survey its customers - public water systems, local health jurisdictions, water consumers, the media - to identify specific pieces of the risk identification/health advisory process that could be improved. One thing that came clear in the survey is that it is critical to customers that they have 24-hour access to division staff during emergencies. In response, the division will be meeting, this month, with regional offices to test some ideas for a system that would provide around-the-clock emergency access.

Meanwhile, the QI team is pulling together information from each regional office about its health advisory processes. (A health advisory is a joint effort by state and local health officials to communicate the level of risk associated with drinking water. A Boil Water Order is a health advisory.) The team will use this information to make overall improvements and standardize the health advisory process across the state.

For additional information about the Division of Drinking Water's quality improvement project, call Bill Liechty, the team leader, at (360) 753-5953.

Training on Revised Design Guidelines in the Works

With the adoption of revised Group A water system regulations now in its final stages, a revised Group A design guidance manual won't be far behind. And it's no accident that a revised design guidance manual for Group B water systems will come out at the same time. The two manuals will be released simultaneously because some Group B design criteria are the same as, and are determined by, Group A design criteria. Both are slated for release shortly after the beginning of the New Year.

Workshops for stakeholders and purveyors on using the Group A Design Manual will most likely be held in late February. Workshops on the Group B manual will be scheduled for the same period for local health jurisdictions. The LHJs will learn how to use the new Group B Design Manual and will review those sections of the manual that have not changed.

DOH will notify stakeholders and LHJs about workshop dates and locations by early January. If you have a specific interest in either of the revised manuals and are not on a Division of Drinking Water or other DOH mailing list, please contact:

Simon Tung (360-236-3132), or Ethan Moseng (360-236-3562), or Jim Hudson (360-236-3131).

First SRF Loan Builds Ozone Plant

In October, the City of Walla Walla signed a contract for a $1,030,000 loan from the state's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program. It was the first loan made through the DWSRF Program.

With the loan, Walla Walla will be able to resolve disinfection compliance issues. The plant — the first ozone plant "of significant size" in Washington, according to Dick McKinley, project director — is expected to be substantially completed in January 1999. Landscaping and other finishing touches will be completed in the spring of 1999. The city also plans to construct two new distribution reservoirs. The city's older, uncovered reservoirs will be used for raw water storage.

Congress created the DWSRF Program as part of the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act reauthorization. The DWSRF provides low-interest loans to help community and non-profit noncommunity water systems make capital improvements. The program is jointly administered by DOH, the Public Works Board, and its fiscal agent, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.

There's More than One "Y2K" Risk

By now, nearly everyone has heard of the Year 2000, or "Y2K," problem. It stems from the old computer programming practice of using only the last two digits of the year. When the date "January 1, 2000" appears, computer programs that use the 2-digit year will interpret the "00" from 2000 as referring to the year 1900.

But there's another risky Y2K situation - embedded chips. The good news is that most embedded chips don't care what year it is. The bad news is some do, and it's difficult to tell the difference. Embedded microprocessors, or chips, are silicon-integrated circuits with permanently coded instructions not easily changed. Embedded chips monitor, regulate, or control the operation of devices, systems, networks or plants. These are part of the computer "hardware," and cannot be changed by rewriting computer programs.

Even the operator of a very small water system, one with only one or two personal computers, would be amazed at the number of embedded chips in his or her facility. Flow controllers, chemical pacing controllers, level sensors, chemical monitors with feedback loops, distribution system automatic valves, and a level or pressure sensors...each of these is operated by an embedded computer chip that likely has a real time processor, or clock, included. If any of these systems can't handle January 1, 2000, it could fail.

Recently, in a simulated Year 2000 exercise, when embedded chips at a water storage facility were tuned in to 2000 dates, the facility's entire chemical holdings - normally used in carefully regulated amounts - were dumped into the water in one hit.

What happens to stakeholders using embedded chips should matter to you, too. Electric power failures, problems with treatment chemical supply and delivery, telephone and telecommunication failures, and failures that may affect water quality in your system's watershed - all are possible scenarios.

Implement an action plan for your system to deal with embedded chips. Basic elements of a good action plan are:

Inventory: Locate and make a list of all computerized equipment.

Assessment and Testing: Prioritize your inventory list. Does any of the equipment have a real-time clock? If so, contact the vendor to see if the system is Y2K compliant or if there are any recommended fixes or replacements.

Correction: Handle the problems in priority order. Items critical to operation of systems should be handled first.

Contingency Planning: Develop contingency plans in case systems fail.

There are several web sites that offer water utilities information on Y2K. They are:

AWWA's "www.awwa.org/y2k.htm;" AMWA's "www.amwa-water.org/y2k;" and Washington State's Year 2000 Program's "www.wagov/dis/2000.htm;" and Year 2000 Information Center's "www.year2000.com".

The American Water Works Association's hotline for small water systems will answer questions and help solve problems related to drinking water or utility operations - all for free! The hotline service is available for systems with fewer than 1,000 service connections in the USA and Canada. The hotline is staffed Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM. CALL 1-800-366-0107.

WETRC
Washington Environmental Training Center
1-800-562-0858

ERWW
Evergreen Rural Water of Washington
1-800-272-5981

Education and Training Calendar

Date	Topics	Location	Contact
Jan 13-5	Cross Connection Cert. Review	Auburn	WETRC
Jan 15	WISHA Confined Space Entry	Richland	WETRC
Jan 21	Distribution System Maintenance	Bremerton	Dee Ann Meacham (360) 491-9250
Jan 22	Groundwater & Wells	Seattle	Sharon Gilbert (503) 650-7606
Jan 24-26	Basic Electrical	Everett	WETRC
Feb 4	Cross Connection Control Comm.	Spokane	Denny Lopp (509) 928-4540
Feb 3-5	Pump Operation and Maintenance	Everett	WETRC
Feb 5	Asbestos Cement Pipe Work Proc.	Auburn	WETRC
Feb 9	Motor Controls	Lynnwood	WETRC
Feb 9	Leak Detection and Water Audits	Tacoma	WETRC
Feb 9-10	Fire Hydrants	Auburn	WETRC
Feb 10	Auto Control Valves	Richland	WETRC
Feb 16-18	Chlorination System	Everett	WETRC
Feb 16-18	Management & Technical Conf.	Yakima	ERWW
Feb 23	Coliform, O & M for Small Systems	Wenatchee	Howard Laughery (509) 663-8121
Mar 17-18	Process Control and Instrumentation	Auburn	WETRC
Mar 23-25	W/WW Operations Workshop (WOW)	Ocean Shores	WETRC

In addition to the workshops listed above...

- WETRC will offer a Backflow Assembly Tester Certification Course & Exam on December 14 - 17, in Spokane.
- WETRC will offer a Backflow Assembly Tester Professional Growth Refresher Course
- December 14 and 15, in Auburn; and December 28 and 29, in Spokane.
- WETRC will offer Basic Water Works on December 16-18, in Auburn; and on March 31 - April 2, in Richland.
- WETRC will offer a Water Certification Exam Review on January 5-7, in Everett; and January 20-22, in Auburn.
- ERWW will offer Emergency Planning and Preparedness on January 8, in Ellensburg; and January 10-14, in Omak.
- WETRC will offer Sanitary Survey training on February 11, in Kelso; and on March 5, in Richland.
- Jonathon Cleveland will offer Wellhead Protection Planning Tools on March 1, in Coupeville; March 2, in Port Angeles; and March 3, in Long Beach (509) 962-6326.
- ERWW will offer Wellhead Protection Planning Tools on March 16, in Pomeroy; on March 17, in Ritzville; and on March 18, in Chewelah.

Tap Tips: Source Labeling Problems On Your WFI?

Having difficulty finding out what to do with water sources you are adding or that have become inactive, combined into wellfields, or are no longer being used? Here are a few tips for you to follow to make it easier for you and for DOH to keep track of source testing data.

Make sure that your WFI (Water Facilities Inventory) form is up-to-date and correct! *All* sources that have *ever* been used to serve your water system *must* be listed on the WFI.

To add a source: New sources must be approved by DOH before they are used. When submitting a project for a new source, it is helpful to have either the well number (or a name for the well), or Ecology's well tag number—or both. Your well number does not have to match the source number on the WFI. For example, the source you call Well #3 could be Source #2 (SO2) on the WFI. Perhaps it is your third well, but either your first well— or second well— was never put on line and is decommissioned. Even though Well 1 (or 2) never appeared on the WFI, you want to call the new source well #3 for your records.

To inactivate a source: Please update your WFI to include the date when you actually took the source off-line and its status. Be sure to list the status of the inactivated source. For example, a well may be decommissioned, used only for monitoring or irrigation, capped, or temporarily removed from service.

Creating a wellfield: To have your sources listed as a wellfield, you must first send a wellfield request to DOH. If your request is approved, the wellfield will be assigned its own source number in Section 18 of the WFI, and each source in the new wellfield will appear as a "WW" (well in a wellfield).

We also need to have accurate information on the samples you take. It is critical that you use complete and correct information about the system and the source when filling out lab slips.

You need to include the system ID#, name of the system, and source number (S01, S02 etc.) exactly as they appear (or will appear if the sample is from a new system) on the WFI. Please do NOT put the name of the well driller, contractor, engineer, etc. as the name of the system. If no name, or the wrong name, appears in the "system name" section of the lab slip, the results could be rejected, or credited to another system with a name similar to the incorrect name.

If the sample is for a new system, and that system does not yet have a system ID#, please make sure that the paperwork has the correct system name OR the name of the owner (or future owner) of the water system, and the source name (well 1, well 2, well A, Jones well 1, etc.).

If you have any questions, please call the WFI contact person in your region.

Eastern Office—Karla Griffin (509) 456-5076

NW Office—Jennifer Kropack (206) 389-2634

SW Office—Judy Passey (360) 664-9280

Dr. Drip

Dear Dr. Drip:

Apparently there has been quite a hoo-ha in some towns around the USA when local public water systems propose adding fluoride to the water. I'm confused. What's the story with fluoridated water in Washington state? Also, some folks think fluoride is the neatest thing since sliced bread.
Others think it is the root of all evil. Which side is right?

Sincerely,
Ms. Carrie A. Malgum, Molar, Wash.

Dear Ms. Malgum:

Putting fluoride in people's drinking water is one of those issues that seem to raise a lot of hackles. Opponents think it should be a matter of individual choice, and that it may cause cancer or other health problems. Supporters tout it as the cheapest and most effective way to reduce dental problems, and point out that a half-century of fluoride use hasn't resulted in any health problems.

What a lot of people don't know is that fluoride shows up naturally in a lot of water supplies. In fact, as of 1996, over 200 water systems in Washington (serving nearly 300,000 people) had enough naturally-occurring fluoride in their water to consider it effective in preventing tooth decay.

Another 40-plus systems in Washington—directly serving around 1.5 million people—have decided to add fluoride to their water supplies so their customers can take advantage of its dental health benefits. Over 100 additional city and suburban water systems buy previously-fluoridated water from these systems. These "purchasing" systems provide some level of fluoride in the water they supply to the approximately 1 million consumers on their systems.

Altogether, roughly half the population of the state gets fluoride at significant levels in its drinking water. Because it's difficult to keep up-to-date fluoridation information on file, the DOH Drinking Water Program always recommends that dentists or members of the public contact their water systems directly to find out if they fluoridate, and what the levels of fluoride in their drinking water are.

Dr. Drip thought he'd better refer the second part of your question, about the value of fluoridation, to a specialist.

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH, is a pediatrician and Acting Health Officer for the State of Washington. Dr. Hayes says "Fifty years of scientific research indicate that water fluoridation is the most cost-effective, practical and safe means of reducing tooth decay." She also reminds Dr. Drip that the Surgeon General of the United States and 73 national and international health-related organizations endorse water fluoridation.

Dr. Drip says that what's good enough for Dr. Hayes and the US Surgeon General is good enough for him.

Mary Selecky Acting Secretary

Governor Gary Locke has named Mary Selecky Acting Secretary for the Department of Health. The Secretary of Health is the head of DOH and is a member of the governor's cabinet. The appointment, which was effective as of October 1, fills the vacancy created by the April departure of Bruce Miyahara.

Selecky has been the administrator of the Northeast Tri-County Health District (Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties) since 1979. Although her temporary appointment does not have a specific ending date, she is expected to remain in the position at least through the 1999 legislative session, which begins January 11.

Selecky has said that one of her priorities is to make sure that the department's role in environmental health is perceived as being as vital and essential as it is, and is not assumed to duplicate the work of other agencies. She also intends to continue her support of the six strategic initiatives undertaken by DOH over the past year, including one from the Division of Drinking Water.

In This Issue:

The following people have contributed to the production of this issue of *The Water Tap*: John Aden, Steve Baker, Peter Beaton, Donna Freier, Belle Fuchs, Chris Gagnon, Gregg Grunenfelder, Jim Hudson, Peggy Johnson, Janice Keller-Saul, Bill Liechty, Chris McCord, Dave Monthie, Judy Passey, Lisa Raysby, Dan Sander, Rich Sarver, Jude Van Buren, Ronni Woolrich, and Joyce McCollough, editor.

The Water Tap is published by the Department of Health, Division of Drinking Water, to provide information on subjects of interest to water system owners, water works operators and others interested in drinking water. Comments and questions are welcome. Past issues are available by writing to the editor, *The Water Tap*, Division of Drinking Water, P.O. Box 47822, Olympia, WA 98504-7822, or e-mail your request to DWINFO@doh.wa.gov.

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